

# Answering The Challenge:

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North Carolina's  
Community College  
Learning Resource  
Centers

*Prepared By  
North Carolina  
Community College  
Learning Resources  
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## Message From the President, NCCCLRA

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In 1987 a commission was formed by the State Board of Community Colleges. Its purpose was to develop recommendations regarding policy and action for the North Carolina Community College System. The Commission was composed of education, business, and government leaders. Its report, published in 1989, is entitled **Gaining the Competitive Edge: the Challenge to North Carolina's Community Colleges.**

Learning resources personnel across the state perused the report searching for mention of the library, media services, and learning center. When we were unable to find these specific words, we were disappointed. Then the report was again closely studied. We found that, although we had not specifically been named, the area of learning resources was indirectly addressed in several of the goals and recommendations of the Commission.

The North Carolina Community College Learning Resources Association (LRA) held an indepth planning session on June 8 - 9, 1989. The Commission on the Future Report was discussed at length and developing a response to it from our association became one of our ten goals for the year. Beverly Gass, who had chaired the LRA Planning Committee, agreed to chair a task force charged with the development of an LRA addendum to the Commission Report. The purpose of this addendum is to emphasize the role of the LRC and its staff in the implementation of the Commission on the Future Report. Comments have been made regarding the goals and recommendations which are felt to be most appropriate to the learning resources division.

Joyce Orndoff  
President  
North Carolina Community College  
Learning Resources Association

### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

**The State Board should expand opportunities for professional development to ensure state-of-the-art instruction.**

Learning Resource Center (LRC) personnel have long been and are actively involved in professional development activities. One main source of these activities is the North Carolina Community College Learning Resources Association (LRA), the statewide professional organization composed of LRC staff members, including those in the learning center, in the library, and in the audiovisual departments. One of the four main purposes of the Association as stated in its mission statement is that "The Association shall promote professional and staff development for personnel in the learning resources programs throughout the North Carolina Community College System." This goal is accomplished through an annual conference, district meetings, various committee meetings, and numerous ad hoc groups, where LRC personnel have opportunities to update their knowledge and skills.

LRA works actively with outside groups to provide professional development activities for its members. The organization worked with the Department of Community Colleges in planning and implementing a 1988 Professional Development Institute (PDI) workshop for librarians and is currently working on creating a marketing skills workshop for LRCs. LRA is also co-sponsoring a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) workshop for librarians in March 1990 in cooperation with the North Carolina Central University Library Staff Development Program and the Department of Community Colleges.

LRC personnel are members of other professional organizations such as the North Carolina Library Association and the North Carolina Community College Adult Educators Association. Also, every two years LRC representatives are asked to plan and implement sessions at the state-wide Instructors' Conference, sponsored by the Department of Community Colleges. Through all of these avenues, LRC personnel remain actively involved in upgrading their skills to provide the best service to students, staff and faculty on their campuses.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4:**

**Community Colleges should strengthen partnership with business and industry to provide state-of-the-art vocational and technical education.**

Business and industry throughout this nation, and more specifically in North Carolina, are



characterized by change brought about by technological developments, a changing workforce, and an internationally-based economy. To successfully respond to this change, business and industry need access to information both of a predictive and explanatory nature. Their employees, students in our technical and vocational programs, will need to develop skills, not only in locating information, but in putting this information to work to keep business and industry current.

The ability to locate and use information is preliminary to developing critical thinking processes and must be included within the range of instructional experiences available to our colleges.

Librarians not only need to continue their leadership roles in this area but also will need to embark on new programs of information literacy. These programs need to be especially designed for teaching students who will be the employees of business and industry. It will be essential for them to locate the latest information about industrial developments, business trends or new processes and techniques in medical and nursing care or any other field of endeavor.

It will not be the skills and techniques learned in class today, however, that will stand our graduates in good stead throughout their working lives, but the opportunity for retraining and upgrading and the opportunity to have access to accurate and timely information. All instruction and learning are based on some field of knowledge with rapidly changing information. Reference journals, telecourses, electronic economic databases, and teleconferences are important means of accessing and delivering this state-of-the-art information and are available in LRCs throughout the college system.

Tutorial programs, writing assistance centers, and testing centers are also important avenues of assisting these students who are struggling to keep themselves employable and well trained.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5:**

**The State Board, boards of trustees, and college presidents should encourage innovative teaching methods and curricula.**

The North Carolina Community College System's learning resource programs encourage innovative teaching methods and curricula, and provide students with opportunities to learn how to access information in a variety of formats. In the coming decade, North Carolina's students will have a growing need for information-gathering and information-usage skills as they enter the workplace.

The learning resource centers' audiovisual departments support the use of alternative teaching

techniques. They supply equipment, produce media for instruction, and provide access to such cutting edge technologies as closed circuit and cable television, telecourses, and satellite teleconferencing.

Microcomputer literacy programs, computer labs, and self-instructional courses which are a part of learning resource programs encourage students in self-paced learning.

By providing access to information in a variety of formats, learning resource centers offer the means for students to develop information-seeking skills they need for self-directed study and lifelong learning.

To quote the Learning Resources Concept, a position paper developed by the LRA in 1986, the learning resources center is a "catalyst for innovation, introducing new information and delivery systems and new industrial technologies."

### ***RECOMMENDATION 7:***

**Community colleges should forge strong links between remedial programs and advanced programs.**

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Staff members of all departments in a college's LRC work regularly to help students make this transition from remedial programs to curriculum programs. The learning center is often the site for activities such as developmental/guided studies programs, curriculum courses, tutoring services, and supplemental help for classroom students. These activities are conducted on an individualized, self-paced basis which allows students to work at their own speed. Students often are better able to grasp course content because of the extra help they receive.

The library helps students in transition by teaching them the proper tools for research through the use of electronic information databases, books, periodicals, and other print and nonprint materials. Again there is often individual help for students, who usually do not know much about a library or how to use it properly.

The audiovisual department assists in this venture by helping instructors with graphics for materials to be used in the classroom. Also, in some schools the curriculum design person is located in this area.

### ***RECOMMENDATION 8:***

**The State Board should work with boards of trustees, college presidents, and business and industry to reduce financial barriers to community college education.**

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The learning resource centers throughout the community college system have always maintained



hours of service, staffing patterns, and materials and resources that have been cost-free for the colleges' students and community. The resources in a library enhance the classroom learning experiences through the provision of primary and supplementary materials that may be essential to the completion of course assignments or valuable for the attainment of personal adult lifelong learning goals. Colleges should recognize that these collections of resources and materials and the staff of these facilities are major elements already in place and are a kind of financial aid and should be marketed as such. Tutoring services and assistance with class assignments are ways in which tutorial programs, libraries, and audiovisual departments have always given direct assistance to the students and have never built barriers to their access.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS 2, 11:**

**The State Board and boards of trustees should ensure competitive salary levels for community college personnel.**

**The State Board shall oversee the redesign of the funding process to provide flexible and responsive funding.**

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One of the first steps toward achieving this recommendation is to adjust the allocation to each of the colleges for administrative non-instruction personnel to a level equal to that allocated for teaching faculty. Such a step would be a first effort toward competitive salary levels since most colleges in the region do consider these categories of personnel as faculty.

Some college boards of trustees within the system already have made the commitment to this category of personnel, many of whom staff our learning resource centers, and pay them on the same level as teaching faculty.

Once all professional and faculty categories are paid at comparable levels, then the pursuit of competitive salary levels for community college personnel is realistic and achievable. Although money itself may not be a motivator, it is certainly an indicator of the value placed on a job by that society. Such a recommendation, if achieved, would go far toward expressing to all employees of the North Carolina Community Colleges the value placed on their work and their contribution to the state.

Students enter our learning resource centers seeking any number of services. They may need to locate additional information about some scientific



finding recently announced in the newspaper or described on television; they may need a tutor for some troublesome course they are taking; or they may simply need to review a video demonstration on a nursing technique described in class. To the librarian this is a student needing information; to the tutorial specialist this is a student needing information; to the audiovisualist this is a student needing video services.

The learning resource center staff assist students that are full-time, part-time, enrolled in continuing education or curriculum programs, or enrolled in a GED course. Students, no matter what their needs or academic status, receive the same caring detailed attention until their needs have been met. Yet it takes that staff member as much time to assist that part-time student or that non-FTE generating community member as it does to assist the full-time curriculum student. Funding formulas, however, do not take these facts into account.

Each college learning resource center has established its own philosophy and goals of service in accordance with and as a reflection of local college need. Because our colleges are committed to meeting the evolving educational and training needs of their communities, then learning resource center programs must be equally responsive and flexible in order to contribute meaningfully to the college's efforts to meet those needs.

If a new program is added to the college's curriculum or a new course added to the curriculum program, then the library must identify, acquire, and catalog appropriate materials to support the teaching/learning activities in this program. This may be as simple as adding a few additional mythology books. It could be as complex as acquiring several sets of multi-volume legal reference works, establishing costly relationships with vendors of online computer reference services, acquiring a microcomputer with a modem, and installing new phone lines. Further, librarians will need opportunities for some kind of skills renewal to be able to assist and instruct a paralegal student in the use of these new resources.

In the audiovisual department, the initiation of a new program could mean acquiring additional overhead projectors or video monitors and players. These will need to be scheduled and delivered to the classroom where the instructor conducts his/her classes. Or, the audiovisual staff may need to downlink a national teleconference which the instructor will require all of his students to view.

It is a range of instructional support services that learning resource centers are committed to provide in support for the college's teaching/learning processes.

A range of professional, technical, clerical and student staff provide services which often make the difference between failure and success, between an enriched learning experience and a sterile textbook-based one.

### **RECOMMENDATION 13:**

**The State Board should institute effective planning processes at the state and local levels to obtain greater accountability for the use of system resources.**

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In accordance with the Southern Association of College and Schools guidelines, North Carolina community college learning resource centers are establishing effective planning processes, including the formulation of mission statements consistent with the individual institution's purpose.

Learning resource center administrators are accustomed to effective planning. They have long familiarity with setting priorities for acquiring materials and establishing services. These practices serve LRC administrators well in answering the call for increased accountability. Well-defined annual objectives facilitate the evaluation of services and the projection of future needs, particularly when the objectives have been developed with the needs of the users in mind. Planning for the delivery of learning resources program services has long been a part of college-wide planning activities.

### **RECOMMENDATION 14:**

**The State Board should ensure that data collection systems support planning and accountability efforts.**

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The North Carolina Community College Learning Resources Association has as one of its current goals to standardize data collection on service delivery by its learning resource centers throughout the fifty-eight colleges in the community college system. Collection of comparable data by each learning resource center would make for a more balanced and equalized level of learning resource center services. Local college administrators would have indicators of quality and accountability for measuring their local college delivery of learning resource center services.

Such data collection for learning resource centers has already been standardized nationally through the efforts of the Association of College and Research Libraries of the American Library Association. The result of this national effort is a publication entitled ACRL University Library Statistics 1985-86 and 1986 "100 Libraries Statistical Survey," available from the American Library Association.

Further standardization of service delivery has been guided for decades by the national guidelines also developed by the Association of College and



Research Libraries. A draft revision of the standards has been announced as recently as June 1989 in College and Research Libraries News in "Standards for Two-Year College Learning Resources Programs: A Draft." Both of these documents provide valuable information for administrators to evaluate and compare the delivery of learning resource center services locally.

### **RECOMMENDATION 16:**

**The State Board should continue to develop and expand joint programming to provide efficient use of state resources.**

The primary purpose of the learning resources program is to promote learning through the academic program of the institution. In order to do this effectively, access to all types of information services is necessary.

North Carolina community college learning resource programs provide records of local resource materials through catalogs, indexes, and bibliographies. In addition, since institutional self-sufficiency is no longer possible, LRCs utilize new delivery systems and cooperative relationships to cut across boundaries of time and distance. LRCs provide information links between educational institutions, other libraries, and governmental agencies.

The use of a central location, Media Processing Center in Raleigh, to process newly acquired materials, is efficient and cost-wise, freeing up library professionals across the system to better serve students and local patrons. Also, the utilization of a central facility for processing materials reduces processing staff needs on individual campuses.

Consortia-buying of resource materials promotes efficient use of state resources. Interlibrary loan agreements provide a basis for learning resource centers across the state to share timely, accurate materials efficiently.

Through the use of computer databases, students can access statewide and nationwide information without leaving the campus, while the newly developed satellite telecommunications network can deliver seminars and speakers directly to individual campuses.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS 18, 19, 20:**

**The State Board should oversee the development of a broader basic skills curriculum.**

**The State Board should upgrade the capacities of individual community colleges to recruit and retain underskilled adult learners.**

**The State Board should provide for adequate faculty and support staff in basic skills programs.**

The North Carolina Community College Learning Resources Association strongly supports the instructional innovation present in all areas of the LRC. One of the four major purposes found in its mission statement addresses this area: "The Association shall encourage innovation and quality in the delivery of learning resources programs supporting the instructional programs of the North Carolina Community College System." The Association as well as each LRC also strives to make LRCs the part of the institution that can provide the instructional requirements needed to support the diverse educational programs.

*Learning resources exist to facilitate and improve learning by supporting and expanding classroom instruction and to perform the instructional function of teaching students the information-seeking skills for self-directed studies and life-long learning. (Standards for Two-Year College Learning Resources Programs: A Draft, p. 497.)*

The basic skills movement received its beginnings in the learning centers of many schools. Programs such as the GED, adult high school, and basic education can still often be found in a learning center setting. A variety of print and nonprint materials and computer assisted instruction are used to help students in basic skills areas such as reading and English grammar.

Computer technology can also be found as an instructional tool in the library and in the media area. Librarians help students to learn how to seek and use information from a variety of sources. Audiovisual personnel work with instructors to provide better instructional methods through the use of computers and other audiovisual equipment.



## **RECOMMENDATION 22:**

**The State Board should expand the capacity of the community college system to provide customized training to advance technological change.**

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In most two-year institutions an expanded concept of learning resources provides services to the college and the college's local community. Because of community control, public two-year colleges are responsive to local needs. North Carolina community college learning resource centers are responsive to and intimately involved in the entire educational program, developing up-to-date, comprehensive collections to support specialized curricula. By sharing this information statewide, each institution's specialty becomes a resource for the entire state to tap.

Special services available at some institutions include satellite conferencing facilities, specialized museums, telecourse administration, government document depositories, telefacsimile service, and database searches.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS 26, 27:**

**The State Board of Community Colleges and the State Board of Education should require all community colleges and public high schools to develop cooperative efforts.**

**The State Board should expand the effectiveness of college transfer programs as bridges to higher education.**

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There are many cooperative efforts and relationships existing between the college's learning resources program and the public high schools. Some of these are formalized; while others are much more casual.

There is probably not one library in the entire fifty-eight college system that does not have many high school students turning to them after schools are closed. They need assistance and resources for their assignments which our libraries can supply.

There are professional relationships existing between LRC staff and their local public school counterparts. Audiovisual staff members have

assisted in in-service training sessions for public school faculty and have been called upon to use audiovisual equipment that may be too specialized or too sophisticated for the neighboring high school to own. The reverse of this may also be true.

Some high school media centers may have an organization of student assistants that visit their local community college learning resources program facilities to get another perspective about a neighboring "library."

There is much room, however, to expand these relationships and find meaningful ways to work cooperatively to enhance the learning experiences of all students.

Similar relationships and agreements exist between community colleges and four-year colleges in the same service area. Referrals and interlibrary loans of books for students, and interlibrary loans of audiovisual materials for faculty are a part of the cooperative professional ethic that librarians have long had.





**Answering The Challenge**  
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